

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 512

SP 006 380

TITLE Interdisciplinary Studies and Independent Study as
General Education for Teachers.
INSTITUTION Oklahoma Coll. of Liberal Arts, Chickasha.
PUB DATE 72
NOTE 23p.
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Independent Study; *Interdisciplinary Approach;
*Program Content; *Program Descriptions; *Teacher
Education
IDENTIFIERS *Distinguished Achievement Award Entry

ABSTRACT

This document describes the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts design for interdisciplinary studies (IDS) and independent studies (ID) as general education for teachers. This document covers five areas: description and development of the general education program, personnel, budget, evaluation procedures and data, and how the programs contribute to the improvement of teacher education. Each area is divided into IDS and ID information. (MJM)

015W WROJ

7-5-71 11:00 AM

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 076512

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND INDEPENDENT STUDY
AS GENERAL EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

THE OKLAHOMA COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO-
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIG-
INATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPIN-
IONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY
REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDU-
CATION POSITION OR POLICY.

SP 006 380

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND INDEPENDENT STUDY
AS GENERAL EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

THE OKLAHOMA COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

PART I

DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENERAL
EDUCATION PROGRAM

The development of the programs of Interdisciplinary Studies and Independent Study came about as a result of two years of a college self-study. These programs, now known as IDS and IS, were two aspects of a general institutional change which occurred when the Oklahoma State Senate, in 1965, transformed the Oklahoma College for Women into the Oklahoma College for Liberal Arts. A more detailed description of this change may be found in A New Dimension in Oklahoma Higher Education: the Oklahoma College for Liberal Arts, Volume I (Exhibit #1, iii-iv).

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, in July of 1965, then issued a resolution outlining the general objectives of the new institution, and directed that the college Board of Regents, the Administration, and the Faculty prepare a plan for the new

college according to those general objectives. These were that the new college be an experimental liberal arts college with innovative programs designed to serve abler students. Another requirement, which was modified by the OCLA faculty, was that the college operate on a trimester calendar. The original purpose of this requirement was to increase year-round attendance so that the resources of the college might be utilized more effectively. The trimester plan adopted by OCLA met this requirement, but the structuring of the Third Trimester to include a five-week period of independent study gave the new calendar significantly greater educational opportunities than had been anticipated (Exhibit #1, pp. 1-5).

The plans for the new college (i.e. Exhibit #1) were approved by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in October of 1966. The plan was the product of the entire campus - the Board of Regents, the Administration, the Faculty, and representatives from among the students. Outside consultants contributed a great deal. Dr. W. Hugh Stickler, of the Florida State University, was the general consultant. Another was A. J. Brumbaugh of the Southern Regional Education Board. Other consultants came to us from Florida Presbyterian College, Monteith College, the University of Michigan, and Stephens College.

Implementation of the plan followed. The two academic programs which received immediate attention were the development

of the core courses in general education and independent study.

A - Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS)

Several principles guided those who planned the courses in general education. These were drawn in part from The Reforming of General Education, by Daniel Bell (New York: 1966, pp. 51-52). The courses were to demonstrate the "unifying needs" of American society, to make the student aware of the significance of traditions, to counteract the dominance of specialization, and to integrate knowledge by an interdisciplinary approach. The sequence of courses was planned as follows:

IDS 103-113 Contemporary Man in World Society. A freshman requirement designed to make the student aware of the forces at work in his world.

IDS 124 Composition and Speech.

IDS 134 Composition and Literature. These two freshman requirements are much like the traditional courses. There are, however, some differences. The course in composition and speech combines the teaching of rhetoric and writing with the teaching of speech and communication skills. The course in composition and literature is designed to stress those interpretive skills which will be helpful to the student in other interdisciplinary courses.

These courses are also different in that the teachers of the courses meet their common problems and goals.

IDS 144 Mathematics and Modern Man. A freshman or sophomore requirement designed to acquaint the student with the structure, language and thought processes of mathematics, including "computer language" and the computer.

IDS 153-163 Foundations of Science. These freshman or sophomore requirements "cut across the fields of matter and energy, cosmology, and biology... . Emphasis is placed on the profound effects which science and technology have had upon our lives, culture, thinking and chances for survival" (Exhibit #2, Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts: 1971-72 Catalog, pp. 43-44).

IDS 173 The Principal Ideas of Greece and Rome.

IDS 283 The Principal Ideas of Oriental Civilization.

IDS 293 The Principal Ideas of Medieval and Renaissance Man.

IDS 303 The Principal Ideas of the Modern World. The purposes of these courses are to introduce "the chief accomplishments of Europe and the Orient by focusing on their history, literature, philosophy and arts" (Exhibit #2, p. 44). The primary emphasis is on how the people of these cultures lived.

IDS 403-413 The American Experience in History and Government.

These senior courses are designed to be the capstone of the requirements in general education. The students "explore certain

issues in American life that are likely to affect students significantly in the next decades, to place these issues in a historical context, to examine the governmental principles and values inherent in them" (Exhibit #2, p. 44).

Since these courses are required of every student, it was obvious at the outset that enrollment would be too large to permit the individual responses which everyone thought to be necessary. For this reason it was decided, in the initial planning, that discussions sections of under thirty students would be held on a regular basis in every course. At the present time every course in the IDS sequence, except the composition courses, is presented as a combination of large lecture sessions and smaller discussion sections.

It was also planned from the outset that the standup lecture format would be avoided as much as possible. In every course, again with the exception of the composition courses, overhead projectors, transparencies, slides, films, and records are used to involve several of the senses. Slowly the college has acquired a collection of slides and films.

Other means for avoiding the usual lecture format are routinely used in all of the courses. Guest lecturers from the faculty frequently appear. Sometimes panel discussions are presented. When appropriate, even student lecturers are used.

Four courses in physical education are also required, but

since these are not, in the strictest sense, interdisciplinary, they are not included in the IDS sequence. However, the general sentiment among the faculty is that this requirement is of definite value to the students.

The initial development of the IDS sequence followed a pattern. A faculty member was selected to serve as the chairman for the preparation and presentation of the course. Other faculty members, usually at the ratio of one for each sixty students expected to enroll in the course, were selected to help prepare the course. Students were selected to serve on most such committees to help in planning.

In addition outside consultants, employed by the use of Title III funds, aided these committees in planning. In addition to those already cited above, consultants came from the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, and Oklahoma Christian College.

In several of these courses it was necessary to plan textbooks. Five textbooks were planned and published for Contemporary Man in World Society, one was written for Mathematics and Modern Man, two syllabi were written for the science sequence, one syllabus (now abandoned) was written for the Medieval and Renaissance course, and several books of readings were printed for The Principal Ideas of Modern Man (Exhibits #3, #4, #5). In some cases students

participated directly in the writing of these materials; in some their suggestions and ideas certainly influenced the final product.

All of these courses were not presented initially at the same time. Those courses required of freshmen were presented the first year. The courses in the humanities were presented the second year, and the American Experience was presented last, six trimesters after the initiation of the program.

B - Independent Study

Independent study, as conducted at OCLA, was originated in a sub-committee during the self-study, that committee being the Committee on Calendar. Practical considerations were no doubt paramount in the minds of that committee when they suggested a Third Trimester consisting of five weeks of independent study and ten weeks of the regular curriculum. Nonetheless, IS has become the most effective as well as the most imaginative part of our program of general education. Briefly, these are the chief features of the IS program:

1. Any regularly enrolled student may enroll in IS. Each project is for five hours of credit.
2. There are prerequisites for some of the projects, but enough options are available to enable each student to study in any field he chooses.
3. Since the IS courses are created for one term only, and

may never be repeated, the college is not bound by its catalog. The student may create his own project (if he can find a faculty member willing and able to supervise it), and the faculty members can create their own projects (if they can find students willing to enroll in them).

4. Projects can be flexible enough to permit freshmen and seniors to enroll in the same project without regard to past accomplishments.
5. Since many of these projects are not tied to the campus, students have opportunities to study off campus in many settings. A partial listing follows:-
 - (a) study abroad
 - (b) working in some role in other institutions, such as homes for the aged, police departments, hospitals, public schools, businesses, museums, government agencies, etc.
 - (c) field trips in the physical, biological and social sciences.
6. Since these are both individual and group projects, the student is not dependent upon class-size in seeking a subject to study.
7. Since the teacher's role is different - he is a guide, an arbiter, a counselor in IS - he is not bound by the usual

pressures of preparation. This is not to say that the teacher is totally divorced from his usual role, but during IS it is inevitable that the teacher frequently finds himself less expert than the student who has completed his project.

The machinery necessary to prepare for the IS term each year is simple in outline. Each fall an IS faculty is selected. Normally about twenty are employed. This faculty then prepares a list of projects to be offered for the consideration of the students. In the Second Trimester students enroll. Those who cannot find a project among those courses may create projects of their own. More information may be found in the bulletin, "Independent Study at OCLA" (Exhibit #6).

To date IS has been increasingly successful. In the first year under forty percent (246) of the eligible students enrolled. In 1971 over half enrolled (345).

PART II

PERSONNEL INVOLVED

A - Interdisciplinary Studies

As was described, the entire campus was involved in the self-study which created these programs. It is obvious that not every student took a direct part, but certainly every student was aware of what was taking place and played at least an indirect role.

The implementation of these programs likewise involved a large portion of the campus. An assistant academic dean was appointed to coordinate the IDS and IS programs. A standing committee on curriculum and independent study, consisting equally of faculty and students (excepting the faculty chairman), was appointed by the Faculty Senate to work on the development of these programs. The assistant dean and the committee were, of course, open to communication from all other college agencies.

A number of faculty members already on the OCLA staff were appointed to work on the IDS course teams. In addition, during almost each year since 1966, funds made available from Title III funds have enabled us to employ teachers to aid us in presenting IDS courses.

The past year, academic year 1970-71, is typical of the personnel involved in presenting the IDS courses:

1. Contemporary Man in World Society: professors of history,

political science, mathematics, physical education and psychology.

2. Composition and Speech: professors of drama and speech.
3. Composition and Literature: professors of English and psychology.
4. Mathematics and Modern Man: professors of mathematics (and this year a professor of drama).
5. Foundations of Science: professors of biology and physics.
6. The Principal Ideas of Greece and Rome: professors of drama, philosophy and English.

The Principal Ideas of Oriental Civilization: professors of psychology, philosophy and English.

The Principal Ideas of Medieval and Renaissance Man: professors of music, chemistry, French and psychology.

The Principal Ideas of the Modern World: professors of philosophy and history.

7. The American Experience in History and Government: professors of political science, history and economics.

In addition to these faculty members there were others who helped in the presentation of the courses. Clerical help was provided by the student employees. The audio-visual department of the college processed orders for materials, provided equipment and sometimes provided operators to run equipment. The library staff was of

inestimable help. Substantial collections of books and journals have been provided to serve these courses.

B - Independent Study

The number of faculty for IS has been consistent. About twenty teach each year. These figures do not, however, present an accurate picture. Some division chairmen have supervised projects on a part-time basis. In addition it must be understood that when outside agencies have volunteered to work with our students, they have, in a very real sense, added to our staff. One example: the professional staff at the Enid State School for the Mentally Retarded, in Enid, Oklahoma, has permitted our students to work there. They have also permitted them to live on the grounds in campus housing at low rates, and have permitted them to eat in the campus cafeteria at minimum rates. The professional staffs of museums, mental hospitals, public schools and many other institutions have unselfishly and unstintingly given of their time and expert knowledge to give our students opportunities to learn and to serve. How can such resources be evaluated? Without any sense of being melodramatic, we can honestly say that these resources seem limitless.

During the IS term, the college operates at a reduced level, but dormitories, food services and physical education services are available for those students who live on or nearby the campus. The administrative offices and the maintenance staff work at a normal level.

PART III

BUDGET

A - Interdisciplinary Studies

In 1970-71 those faculty members who taught in IDS courses received \$177,000.00 for the part of their time devoted to teaching these courses. The total budget for faculty salaries was \$670,000.00. The IDS total amounts to 25% of all salaries. This ratio is about the same as for other years, and for the present year.

The IDS faculty draw from their division budgets for materials and supplies, so figures are not available. However, each year \$2,000.00 is available for materials and supplies, including film rentals, above the divisional budgets.

The library budget is also divided into divisional categories. For this reason figures are not available. However, no reasonable requests are ever refused.

In addition to these resources the IDS sequence has benefited enormously from the Title III grants of previous years. The college has been permitted to employ National Teaching Fellows every academic year since 1966. Almost all of these Fellows have taught in IDS courses, or have permitted regular faculty members to prepare and to teach the new courses. During the last three years these Fellowships have been combined with Faculty

Fellowships to permit some of our regular faculty members to take leave for advanced study. Eight of our regular faculty have received such leave in the past three years. In most cases these faculty members have returned better able to serve in the IDS courses. In two instances, however, the only intent in granting leave was to enable the faculty members to do advanced work in their special fields.

And, as was mentioned earlier, Title III funds made it possible to employ consultants who helped us develop the IDS courses. They have also provided us with transportation and communication expenses, printing costs, rental costs and secretarial help.

The following summary of benefits received from Title III funds is not exhaustive, but it does reveal the ways in which the monies have been used to develop the IDS program.

1966-67 Total grant: \$122,490.00

1. A consultant to help with the development of the IDS Mathematics and Modern Man course.
2. An NTF to help develop the IDS Foundations of Science course.
3. A consultant (Dr. John Decker of Stephens College) to help develop the IDS Contemporary Man in World Society course.

1967-68 Total grant: \$51,640.00

1. Consultants to provide assistance in developing the IDS courses in biology, physical science, American history and government and sociology.
2. A consultant to help us prepare for our first term in independent study.
3. Two NTF's in speech and drama to provide released time for our regular faculty in preparing the courses in the humanities.

B. - Independent Study

The faculty salaries for the IS term, academic year 1970-71, were \$33,129.00. Each faculty member received one-third of his regular salary for one trimester. This figure is consistent with the expenditure of other years.

PART IV

EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND DATA

To date there have been no conclusive attempts to evaluate either the IDS or IS programs. Questionnaires of various kinds have been administered from time to time during each academic year, some by the students, some by the faculties of individual courses, some by administrative officers. None of these were considered to be acceptable for the following reasons:-

1. The purposes of the programs are mixed, i.e. they are supposed to enrich the students' experience, they are supposed to change his attitudes toward the world around him, and they are supposed to make him more knowledgeable about the cultures of the world.

Since we have little exact knowledge about the student before the new programs were instituted, we have no reliable means for measuring any changes, and we know of no means to measure changes in attitudes.

2. The student body has changed continuously since the college changed. Men enrolled for the first time in 1966. Since then the percentage of men enrolled has increased.
3. The entrance requirements have been changed twice

since 1966. And the average score of entering freshmen on the ACT test has climbed from 17.6 in 1965 to 20.1 in 1970.

We do have information of another kind. OCLA was visited by an evaluation team from NCATE from November 8th to 11th of this year. Their comments on the IDS program were very commendatory, but their report will not be issued until next spring. One event of their visit was very encouraging. At the team's request, a number of high school administrators and teachers were brought together to discuss the quality of the student teachers sent to them by our college. They were particularly appreciative of the general education programs. All agreed that they preferred teachers with the kind of background we provide for our prospective teachers. Unfortunately this kind of hearsay evidence is not valid at date: we offer it for whatever use may be made of it.

It is even more difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of independent study. That the program is popular is manifest. That the faculty like the program is equally clear. Newspaper coverage of the projects has been commendatory. Numbers of students can give "testimony" to the quality of their experiences. But we know of no way to evaluate the program by enumeration.

Thus far, for example, we do not even have alumni of the new college. Only last year did the first OCLA class graduate. It is

quite obvious, too, that it will be a number of years before the overall impact of our programs on the lives of our students can be evaluated.

PART V

HOW THE PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTE TO
THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATIONA - Interdisciplinary Studies

That teachers should receive a general education is a truism. How they should become generally educated is not as clear. We consider the IDS program to be a superior program for the following reasons:-

1. Courses in general education are designed for the specific purpose of giving students a chance to obtain a general overview of their world and its past. There has been a conscious rejection of the idea that an introduction to a discipline is adequate to accomplish this end.
2. Arbitrary distinctions between subject-matter areas are largely eliminated. While it is true that the IDS courses have broad discipline connotations, the fact that the teachers themselves are not selected solely because of their disciplines has prevented the courses from becoming introductions to disciplines.

It is also true that the teachers themselves have consciously attempted to introduce and to maintain an interdisciplinary framework for the courses. An examination of the texts included as exhibits will show this.

3. Although the courses are presented in part in large lecture sessions, the fact that these lectures are frequently presented in various ways is a good example to the prospective teacher of ways to vary his own teaching techniques.
4. The fact that every large class is broken into small discussion groups also serves to give a future teacher another alternative to the traditional format. Since these discussion groups are normally conducted by students, every student has many chances to learn from his peers. If we accept as a premise the idea that teachers should know that their own students can interact with one another and learn from one another, then these discussion experiences are valuable.
5. The courses are "open-ended". Seldom is there an answer in an IDS course. There are many questions, and there are many ways to ask questions. Lectures are called presentations because ideas, historical descriptions and the arts are presented, not explained. One of the difficulties with these courses has been the devising of suitable examinations. We have not succeeded.

Since the IDS program is a major part of the college curriculum, the methods used, and the philosophy which underlies them, are explained to the students in every course. The prospective teacher, then, has chances to understand these concepts: (1) the possible dangers of specialization; (2) many alternatives to traditional teaching methods; (3) the "open-ended" approach to traditional teaching methods; (4) the need for eliminating, to some degree, arbitrary distinctions among areas of learning and investigation.

B - Independent Study

Since students who are preparing to teach frequently have, in comparison with other students, few chances to elect courses of their own choosing, the IS program gives the future teacher invaluable opportunities to study in relatively unstructured situations. Some, of course, do independent study in the public schools - as teacher's aides, as observers, etc. - but others who do independent study in education do original work of other kinds. Some have prepared their own textbooks, some have read, some have done scholarly research. Freshmen sometimes use the period to determine whether they wish to be teachers.

Other future teachers have studies wherever their interests have led them. Some have studied art, some have studied literature, some have traveled abroad. It is difficult to assess the value of such programs. Two come immediately to mind: (1) there is a

chance to learn what can be done in an unstructured situation; (2) there is a chance to learn how effectively one can learn in an area far removed from one's major area.

Since students in IS have minimal contacts with the faculty, have no classes to attend, and have no classrooms, the future teacher has a chance, hopefully, to re-define his concept of what education is. This could be the program's greatest contribution to his future as a teacher.